

Remarks of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Agoura Hills Public Library
Centennial Celebration of the Los Angeles County Public Library
September 8, 2012

Thank you for inviting me to be with you today to celebrate Los Angeles County Public Library's 100th Birthday.

We all share a personal affection for public libraries. When I visited our local public library in Los Angeles as a child and got my first library card, I felt like I was walking into a new world of possibilities. I saw endless stacks of books and magazines on every topic imaginable and a tranquil environment that invited me to sit and browse.

But beyond our affection for libraries, we understand how integral they are to our communities and democratic way of life.

Public libraries advance us as a nation. They help foster literacy. They give us the tools we need to make more informed decisions. They bring us together to engage in cultural and civic discourse. And, they offer their services equally to anyone who wants them.

Libraries also play a vital role in bridging the digital divide -- the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" in the digital age. In 2009, when President Obama and Congress developed the stimulus package to help put Americans back to work, I worked very hard to get funding for community anchor institutions, including public libraries, to boost broadband access and adoption. Los Angeles received

more than \$20 million in stimulus funds for computer upgrades, expansions, and training.

Although most library funding is provided at the state and local level, the federal government also provides important assistance. Unfortunately, federal funding for museums and libraries has declined in recent years. I have fought these cuts and I'm extremely disappointed that the committee report accompanying the House-passed Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 2013 states that support for museums and libraries "is not a core Federal responsibility."

That view is misguided. The federal government has a big stake in maintaining a strong public library system. Public libraries are critical to the free flow of information, which is important for our democracy to thrive, and they enhance the knowledge and skills we must have to keep our competitive leadership in the twenty-first century. You can count on me to continue to do all I can to keep them adequately funded, especially in difficult economic times, when they are relied on more than ever.

Thank you again for inviting me to join you today.